

Testimony before the House Regulatory Reform Standing Committee

Tuesday November 12, 2013

Robert Getz, President, Village of Baroda, Berrien County, Michigan

RE: HB 4257 - Redevelopment Project Liquor Licenses

Good morning. My name is Bob Getz, President of the Village of Baroda.

I am here today, to urge the passage of HB 4257 granting Villages the ability to obtain redevelopment liquor licenses now only available to redevelopment projects located in cities.

Let me explain why this is important to Baroda.

Historically, Baroda was known as the "tool & die" capital of southwest Michigan. In 2008 we had 8 shops employing 220 people. Today we have 3 remaining employing 61 people.

In 2004 we knew something needed to be done, or we would become "just another Michigan ghost town".

Recognizing that we sat in the center of Southwestern Michigan's wine country with 5 wineries within 5-miles, and more in the making, we redid our strategy - rebranding Baroda as the "Heart of Wine Country".

We saved \$350,000 of DDA and Village funds and in 2006 began road repairs, streetscape improvements, mural artworks and a small business loan program – resulting in over \$2 million Village, MDOT, MEDC and USDA - Rural Development investment.

We saved our last eatery from bankruptcy sale, and converted 2 industrial buildings into wine & brew production & tasting rooms. Using a Commercial Renovation Tax Abatement, we repurposed the closed breakfast diner into our first artist studio.

We have invested our last available funds to purchase land for future a 100-car parking lot, to accommodate tour buses, 5th wheelers and more tourist parking.

Our successes have been noted. We were an MML Community of Excellence Award winner and have been chronicled in MML's Review Magazine; MSU's Planning & Zoning News, the national publication Downtown Idea Exchange and even our competitors in Indiana in their LaPorte Harold Argus newspaper. We also were awarded a Community Administrator leadership award by the Michigan Society of Planning.

Where in 2008 our downtown buildings were about half empty, today they are 70% occupied.

It's taken 11 years to get this far, but were not done.

Because our economic reinvention is based on Chicago and Northern Indiana tourists, our wineries and other businesses have continually spoken to the need of lodging and restaurants catering to these tourists.

The second phase of reinventing Baroda is designed to meet this need.

Being a community of 900 people with 2 existing liquor licenses we don't have any licenses to offer.

We were told in 2012 this was a problem by an interested party, who stated they would not purchase a license in the open market and then speculate on its transfer for use in the Village.

As you can tell, Baroda's continued economic development must assure those interested in locating a restaurant serving our out-of-state wine & brew tourist trade the ability to grant them a liquor license.

Baroda asks for no special favors, just the opportunity to be treated on an equal basis as Michigan cities that can apply and secure Redevelopment Liquor licenses.

For more information & question: Bob Getz cell: 269-930-7008 email: getsbob@aol.com